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Veil of secrecy tough to pierce

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While the world waited Monday for confirmation of Konstantin Chernenko's death, Soviet television led off its morning programs with a feature on baking pumpernickel bread.

It was the usual frustration with Soviet secrecy for Kremlinologists — those who gather

information on the Soviet Union — and many intelligence experts say the veil is more impenetrable than ever.

One reason, say critics of U.S. intelligence: We're relying too much on computers. The CIA and DIA — the Defense Intelligence Agency — have "lost the sense of the classic analyst with the green eyeshades and soup on his tie," said Paul Smith, chief editor of the U.S.

Information Agency's Problems of Communism.

Another possible reason: "The time of governmental researchers is almost completely consumed with short-term demands from Congress and various administrative offices," says Oberlin College President S. Frederick Starr.

The U.S. intelligence effort also depends on hundreds of university academics, ex-gov-

ernment researchers and professional "think tankers" who pore over obscure bits of information for clues to Soviet life.

For the CIA and DIA, satellites "can flag every new factory building, every new road," said Harry Rositzke, who from 1946 to 1970 worked for the CIA.

"The old signals like who's standing on the Kremlin Wall are still valid," said Jerry

Hough of the Brookings Institution. "But there are lots of newer ones you have to pay attention to — who gets TV play, which commentators are on the most, which economists are published — shadows on the cave wall."